

Is Luke 20:35 a Case for Celibacy

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Is Luke 20:35 a Case for Celibacy?

Scripture verse:

Luke 20:34 *And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:*

Luke 20:35 *But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:*

Luke 20:36 *Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection*

This passage above gives an on-the-face-of-it impression that Luke is recording a dialogue from Jesus about faithful believers, but there is confusion here where he talks about “*neither marry nor are given in marriage*”. So I ask the question, “Is this referring to a special class of believer who is observing celibacy, which immediately brings to mind particular convocations who practise this restraint.”

And this caused me a little concern and inspired me to look into these matters. What I found was profound and it lead me back to the Greek language and how Verse 35 was translated. So let’s put this dialogue into context.

Jesus was teaching the people in the temple the good news (Gospel) about Messiah when the temple officials confronted him. They questioned him as to his authority and manipulated the conversation with the intention of trapping him into saying something upon which they could accuse him of being heretical. Jesus told them the parable of the husbandmen taking over the land of the owner who went to a distant country and he continued to have discussion with the temple officials despite their attempts to catch him out. They asked if it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, and in answering, Jesus challenged them on their motives for the question realising they were baiting him.

Then came the Sadducees who deny the philosophy of resurrection so they crafted a question relating to a particular woman who married one of seven brothers who subsequently died unexpectedly and the woman was, according to tradition, given to the next brother to look after her. After a succession of all the brothers dying with none of the relationships producing children (so the story went) the Sadducees sort from Jesus what would happen to this poor woman in the resurrection. As part of Jesus’ answer to them, we come to Verses 34 to 36.

On the surface we can read into Jesus' answer that for anyone to be worthy of this resurrection they would not marry nor be given in marriage, and if they observed this, then "*neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels*". Pretty powerful stuff on the surface isn't it? And we can understand the motives of any group who would promote this translation as being the way to go, without having to die, to be like angels – with all of their trappings and powers.

But sadly this interpretation is seriously flawed and it just doesn't work like that. Well hurray for that! Where the linguistic hitch occurs is how the translators have dealt with the word "obtain" in Verse 35. The original word in Greek means: *to make ready, bring to pass, secure*. It does not mean obtain in the context of anyone who is celibate can achieve this angel-like state.

The verse therefore should correctly read (to make better sense in this 20th century era),

*"But they which shall be accounted worthy to **make ready and bring to pass** that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection"*

The answer Jesus is giving the Sadducees is referring specifically only to himself as Messiah, the son of God, who as we know was the only one worthy for this undertaking, and who went before all believers and prepared the way through death where souls first are held in The Place of Death to then be sprung out of these chambers by the force and power of His salvation.

In Jesus' specific case he fulfilled the requisite of the decree for martyrs and this is a far more powerful pathway as martyrs go straight from death to be before God's throne, as he did. But either way, Messiah secures the pathway through the death chambers first and then the subsequent release of souls from the gates of Hell on their way to heaven by the power of salvation.

The summary is that Jesus was the only one worthy to make ready and bring to pass salvation by faith to mankind and to overcome death and render the power of Death void. In these verses he was revealing to the Sadducees that resurrection had come to mankind but only the one who was worthy could bring it to pass; and that worthy soul would not marry nor be given in marriage. And indeed, that is what actually happened.

So don't be fooled here. Jesus, born of Miryam (Mary), the Root of King David and Lion of the tribe of Judah is the only being within all of the heavens and the earth that this particular passage applies. We see this same only begotten Son of God, the Lamb who was slain as a sacrifice for the atonement of the sin of the whole of mankind (past, present and future) again referred to in Revelation as being the only one who is worthy to open the Book (Rev 5:2-14) and there are no self-made men or any person, body or thing that can usurp Jesus; for by saying that there is, identifies them as Sadducees from old that, as our Lord told us, they deny the resurrection.

Jesus lives! He sits at the right hand of the throne of God. He has no successors; he has not passed any title, rite or lineage to mere man, so we need to be clear that this passage from Luke only applies to our Lord God in heaven who will again appear on the earth as the Messiah and who will reign in all power and Glory. Amen.

And to round off let's look at a parable.

A vagabond stole a gentleman's hat and insisted on wearing it all day every day. Time passed and one day the gentleman was out walking with his friends and they saw the vagabond complete with hat, although now it was a little grubby and didn't exactly fit correctly. They said to the gentleman. Isn't that your hat and isn't that the vagabond who stole it? And the gentleman replied. Yes it is. And they pressed the gentleman to call the officer and have the vagabond arrested. But the gentleman said. There is no need - you can still clearly see my name written on its label so everyone who sees it knows this person stole it.

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